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REBUILDING OF THE ACADEMY OF MUSIC.

The reason given for building the Academy of Music in Fourteenth Street was that the Astor Place Opera House was too small. The reason was not valid, because, excepting on special occasions, there was, unfortunately, plenty of room to spare. The Academy in its seating capacity, was from the first by far too large, for although the habitual visitors to the Opera have been more than doubled since its erection, it was never entirely filled, and one-half the time not more than half filled. A seating capacity for 2,500 people is all that is required, and if all the seats are occupied at the prices recently prevailing, a larger sum would be received than was ever recorded on the books of the late Academy.

The public has been led to believe that the Academy was the largest Opera House in the world, with the exception of one or two. This is a mistake. It stands the lowest on the list among the great capitals, the Academie of Paris having an area in square feet 51,300, while the Academy of New York had only an area of 24,020 square feet, which is less than the Opera Houses of Milan, London, St. Petersburg, Genoa, Naples, Berlin, or Munich. The proportions of the foreign Opera Houses allow of much more stage room; L'Academie for instance devotes 28,800 square feet to the stage, and only 22,500 to the auditorium, &c., thus affording ample space for grand and costly scenic effects, and keeping the number of people in the auditorium down to a moderate figure. The proportions of our Academy were for the auditorium 14,260 square feet, and for the stage 9,760, an area by far too small to admit of proper scenic effects. In choosing a plan for the new Academy of Music, the faults of the old Academy should be avoided. The auditorium should be smaller and the

stage larger; the amphitheater should be abolished altogether, which would reduce the unnecessary height many feet; the high supporting pillars, at once obstruction to sight and positive disfigurements, and should be done away with, the tiers of boxes should recede and be self-supporting, resting on party walls of great strength. Such an arrangement would greatly add to the facilities for hearing and seeing. The present system of lighting the house should be abolished. The glare of the gas-lights is positively painful to the sight, the gas-light itself is often unpleasant to the smell, and increases the heat beyond the power of regulation. The system now largely in use in Europe of lighting the house from the top by means of strong reflected gas-lights above a glass ceiling should be adopted. It presents no glare, it diffuses a soft and beautiful light equally; it is favorable to dress, and it possesses this additional and most important advantage, it promotes by means of openings in the glass ceiling, with the concentrated heat above a constantly impending vacuum, insuring a thorough and most perfect ventilation. By this system which must be insisted on, the sight will not be distressed, while the health and comfort of the audience will be essentially promoted.

The seating of the audience is, above all, the most important consideration. Parquet, dress circle, and family circle should be insisted upon, and clearly demonstrated. The system of emptying one section by pouring it upon the crowd from another section debouching by the same opening is not only preposterous but positively unsafe. Had the late fire broken out half an hour earlier, not a soul in the parquet would have escaped alive. If they could have struggled out from the long, crumpled up seats, it would only have been to throw themselves against the frightened and confused masses in the boxes, blocking up every narrow avenue of escape. The ground on which the Academy is to be erected is so favorably situated that it enables the architect to arrange separate means of egress from the parquet both on Fourteenth street and towards Fifteenth street. The higher tiers should also have its separate stairways and exits, so that its crowds should not be turned to swell and obstruct the stream from the boxes. When dress is imperative as in the opera house, the rows of seats should be wider apart—wide enough indeed to permit of passing those seated without personal inconvenience. The groups of seats should not accommodate more than six or eight at the most. These points may seem to be but trifling details, but as regards personal comfort and personal safety, they will be found of the utmost importance. The necessity for securing most of the points we have stated is fully illustrated in the new French Theatre, just erected and opened on Fourteenth street. There the glare of the light is intense, and the heat intolerable, and the ventilation wretched. It is certain that all plans proposed for buildings intended to accommodate large masses of the public, should be submitted to some official inspection before permission to erect them should be granted. There should be some authoritative means taken to guard against the erection of man-traps—to preserve the people from their own recklessness in regard to danger. Accidents do not occur every day; but to guard against the fatal consequences of accidents which may occur should be the duty of some one. We would advise the Directors of the Academy of Music not to be over hasty in their selection of a plan for their new establishment. Before their final acceptance, we urge them to consider seriously all points we have advanced, for they embody the vital principles of such a building, and in a perfect house, where elegance, comfort, and safety are imperative, not one should be omitted.

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ENGLISH OPERA—THEATRE FRANCAIS.

The first performance of the English Opera Company took place last Monday evening before a very large and brilliant audience. The first night of an opera is not a fair subject for close criticism, but we can say truly that we have rarely seen a first performance go off so smoothly, in all respects, as this opera "Doctor Alcantara."

The music is sparkling, melodious, and light enough to please the most fastidious. As to its merits as a composition, we will discuss them in a future article. The three ladies, Miss Caroline Richings, Miss Harrison, and Mrs. Mozart, made a very positive success; Miss Richings especially delighted the audience, receiving several encores for introduced songs. The ladies all deserved very warm praise. Mr. Castle surprised us by his excellent acting; he was easy, and perfectly at home, in a very difficult and unpleasant character. He sang, too, with most excellent taste, and was in fine voice. Mr. Seguin as Dr. Alcantara, displayed much comic humor, and sang like the excellent musician he is. His make up was excellent.

Mr. Peakes, of Boston, has not much of a part, but he makes it one of the prominent features. He sings well, and acts with spirit, and his make up was one of the most perfect things we have seen on the stage for years. It was truly artistic.

The concerted music was performed throughout without any hitch. There was, of course, a lack of color, but that will doubtless be afforded on the repetition of the performance. The choruses were efficiently sung, and the orchestra, a small but very competent one, executed the light and brilliant instrumentation very effectively. Mr. Eichberg conducted the opera with much care, and the smoothness of the performance does credit to his skill and perseverance.

The scenery, at least the one scene, was well painted and well arranged, and the stage man-

agement seems to be in very competent hands. One point, however, should be attended to. The opening time is supposed to be dark night. Three ladies appear from different doors to listen to a serenade. They are supposed not to see each other, and yet the stage was in bright dazzling light. The light, in the house as well as on the stage, should be under control, or such scenes are entirely ridiculous.

The whole performance was very cordially received; even the dialogue, which could hardly have less of point or wit, was listened to with successive good nature. The performers were called out after the first act when the concluding chorus was repeated. Many numbers were encored, and none more heartily than the trifling but intensely ludicrous duo for the serving men in the first act, which is a genuine stroke of broad humor.

The whole performance was, with the audience, a complete success, roars of laughter greeting the incidents as they occurred, and very genuine applause greeted all the vocal efforts of the singers.

"Doctor Alcantara" will be repeated this evening.

NATIONAL ACADEMY OF DESIGN.

Continuing our exploration of the North Room, we come upon

No. 226. "Saranac Woods," by Mr. J. A. Hows, which is good in color, very fine in drawing, and faithfully renders the characteristics of the Adirondack country, with which his drawings have made us all familiar. This is one of the few good pictures which are badly hung.

No. 198. "The Frost King," by Mr. C. V. Cranch. This picture is obviously bad, and strongly reminds us of some of Thomas Hood's caricatures. Mr. Cranch is an Academician.

No. 195. "The Story of Mobile Bay," by Mr. A. W. Warren. The story is pleasantly told, and the picture is very good in color.

Nos. 216, 217, 218, 219. Landscapes by the late Mr. J. A. Suydam. Among these are some of the best specimens of Mr. Suydam's pictures, which are always pleasant, and very truthfully painted.

No. 171. "The Gun Foundry." Mr. J. F. Weir. This picture seems, by general consent, to be the leading work of the present exhibition. It attracts more general attention, and has excited more critical comment, than any other picture on the walls. There is good reason for this, independent of its intrinsic merits as a composition and as a painting. The subject chosen is a bold one, and hard to handle; the danger being that, in giving sufficient strength of contrast, an appearance of exaggeration might prevail. There are elements of power in the subject; the cavernous workshop, with its dim distances; the brawny, spectral figure in the intense light of the molten iron; and the countless details, minute but important, all calculated to add a certain weird grandeur to the scene.

The subject of this picture is the great West Point Gun Foundry, and the time chosen is the casting of one of the huge Parrott guns. In the centre is the vast mould sunk deep into the earth; high above it the ponderous crane, bearing the caldron which the athletic hands, shielded from the intensified heat, are just emptying of its seeth-

contents into the upright flask, which shall give it back cooled, a potent instrument of deadly warfare.

The characteristic of the picture is vivid action. The work itself admits of no delay—the iron must not cool. The figures to the right and left of the caldron, tilting it over by main strength, are drawn with great spirit. Every muscle is at work, and it is not evident that the labor is not light. The figure in front of the flask, holding the rope which guides the motion of the crane or derrick, is admirable, from the air of caution, forethought, and control which is stamped on face and form. The group at the windlass is also full of action, and so of the solitary figure at a distant furnace—the departing point which rests the eye and harmonizes the whole. Mr. Weir has seized a moment of action, and every living thing present is emotionally absorbed in that period. The silent group of spectators on the right, by the fixed, wondering interest they exhibit, intensifies the action of the whole. The entire action of this picture is masterly in its conception and execution.

The picture is honestly painted; no trickery is used. The effect is legitimate, and within the bounds of reality. The glare of the molten iron, without the brightness of fire, is faithfully rendered, and the reflection, which, in less careful hands, might have been merely bright light, is only glare, finely graduated and diffused. The individuals in the group of spectators on the right, are, we understand, portraits of distinguished persons invited to witness the casting of a gun.

All the details of the picture are elaborately worked up to a point of finish, but without deteriorating from the broad and grand effect of the whole.

Mr. Weir has made a marked success by the picture, and has won for himself an individuality by his strong and bold treatment of a commonplace yet difficult subject.

EAST ROOM.

No. 227. "Tasting the Broth," by Mr. C. F. Blauvelt, is in that gentleman's usual happy manner.

No. 233. "Love Me, Love My Dog," by Mr. Alfred Jones. Evidently a study from nature, spirited and correct. The expression of the child's face is admirable.

No. 238. "Monk in Tuscany," by Mr. Elihu Vedder. The same monk, the same cypress trees, and the same dreary landscape that Mr. Vedder has been painting for years. This gentleman has given us many good pictures; we need only mention his "Lair of the Serpent," a fine conception and very original, and a small picture of the "Genii Escaping from the Bottle," which, although, perhaps, suggested by a little drawing by Mr. Harvey, in a head-piece to the notes on one of the chapters in Lane's "Arabian Nights," was very cleverly painted. But for two years past Mr. Vedder appears to have assumed the privilege of successful painters, and gives us a great many very poor pictures.

No. 245. "Study on Will's Creek," by Mr. A. H. Wynant. Truthful and rich in color.

No. 234. "Lake George," by Mr. J. F. Kensett. One of his gray pictures, and beautifully modulated in tone throughout.

No. 247. "Sunday Morning," by Mr. Eastman Johnson. A very fine picture, and what faults it has are merely technical. In the first place, there is a want of relief in the shelf over the chimney,

Mr. Johnson himself evidently felt this, and has attempted to produce the proper effect by placing strongly colored objects on the shelf itself, but without success. There is also a confusion between the light coming from the window and that which comes down the open mouth of the chimney. There also seems to be a fault in drawing, in the left side of the woman nursing the child—an incident not pleasant in a picture.

No. 248. "Autumn Woods," by Mr. W. Whittredge. Although having some fine qualities, it is not as good as Mr. Whittredge's pictures usually are.

No. 250. "October," by Mr. M. Waterman. Original in composition and good in color. The cattle are, by all odds, the most carefully and truthfully drawn in the exhibition. Another example of a most excellent picture badly hung.

No. 251. "Fiddling His Way," by Mr. Eastman Johnson. A most beautiful and glowing piece of color. The incident rendered with great feeling.

No. 256. "Dog and Game," by Mr. E. Terry. As good as it is possible for any still life to be in which such extreme finish is attempted. We notice that Mr. Terry, in his foreshortening, always exaggerates his drawing.

No. 261. "The Studio," by Mr. J. B. Stearns. Bad in color, inexcusable in drawing, and trashy in composition. In fact, any attempt to be specifically critical upon this picture would be simply absurd. A competent and independent tribunal would have excluded it from any exhibition.

No. 265. "The Brunette," by Mr. J. G. Brown. Not so successful as Mr. Brown's pictures usually are. It tells no story, although their is evidently some action intended, which the artist has failed to impart.

No. 267. "The Discarded," by Mr. W. R. Freeman. Full of useful and delicate drawing; the flesh color is particularly good.

No. 285. "Sparking in the Old Times," by Mr. L. E. Wilmarth. The most noticeable thing about this picture is the monumental brass upon the frame, setting forth that Mr. Wilmarth is a pupil of Gerome. Not much the better for Mr. Wilmarth, and much the worse for Mr. Gerome.

No. 287. "A Glimpse of the Caribbean Sea," by Mr. F. E. Church. It is with great regret that we notice that Mr. Church paints many pictures which fall far below the great reputation he has achieved. Here now is a picture which, like many of Mr. Church's recent efforts, has nothing to recommend it but its oddity. Of late, Mr. Church, judging by his exhibited pictures, seems to see nothing in Nature but her vagaries—what the public call "striking effects," but what we are inclined to call "clap-trap."

In this picture he has probably attempted to express some peculiar modification of the surface of the sea, caused by a long point of land running out from the shore. After patient study, this is all we can comprehend of the intention of the painter; but whatever Mr. Church's intention, he has failed in attaining any fact which ever did exist in nature. His "Caribbean Sea" seems to be suspended in mid-air, and his point of land suggests the side of a mountain cliff, and nothing else whatever. On the whole, without the assistance of the catalogue, this picture would seem to be intended as a pendant to the gentleman's "Star of Bethlehem," and to represent Mount Ararat after the flood, before the waters were drained off. The foreground is petty, and the color is not good.

No. 299. "In the Woods," by Miss M. S. Bars-